United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ International community will not tolerate taking of territory by force, nor acquiesce in ethnic cleansing, Co-Chairmen of Yugoslav Conference tell correspondents today in Geneva.

+ Welcoming signing yesterday of Memorandum of Understanding for humanitarian assistance to Iraq, Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson says it will cost United Nations some $217 million.

+ Prime Minister of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia offers to receive Bosnian/Serb aircraft on airfield in Yugoslavia under United Nations control; Croatia says such transfer of aircraft is in violation of arms embargo against territory of former Yugoslavia.

+ Yugoslavia Sanctions Committee receives appeal from Montenegro for urgent humanitarian assistance in wake of floods there.

+ Invitations to attend three Working Groups on Middle East regional issues have been extended to the United Nations.

+ Moldova, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, in separate letters to Secretary-General and President of Security Council, ask for United Nations intervention to solve regional conflict.

+ Tuzla region in Bosnia and Herzegovina appeals to United Nations Protection Force and "the whole world opinion" to organize humanitarian aid to rescue people of that region.

+ Major-General Krishna Narayan Singh Thapa of Nepal appointed Chief of Staff of United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, with effect from 26 October.

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The international community will not tolerate the taking of territory by force, nor acquiesce in ethnic cleansing, the two Co-Chairmen of the International Conference, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, said today. The comments

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were made at a press conference in Geneva following five days of talks on the situation in former Yugoslavia, which has brought together three Presidents and one Prime Minister from that region.

Responding to reports that Bosnia and Herzegovina had in fact been carved up by Serbian and Croatian forces, the Co-Chairmen said the status quo on the ground was not acceptable, and that international recognition and the lifting of sanctions would not take place until a political solution has been found. While some advocated the use of force, they said, the Geneva Conference would use other methods that in the end would triumph.

Reviewing the results of the recent talks, in particular the statement made by the Presidents of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Croatia, Mr. Vance said they had put themselves on record as condemning ethnic cleansing; they had endorsed the principle of the inviolability of international borders; and they had called for the cessation of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the demilitarization of Sarajevo. Important mechanisms had been established to achieve those goals, he said, including a Joint Inter-State Committee to work for the normalization of the relations between Belgrade and Zagreb and a Liaison Office in the two capitals.

To deal with problems impeding the return of displaced persons to the United Nations Protected Areas of Croatia, Mr. Vance recalled that a Quadripartite Mechanism had been created involving the Croatian Government, local Serb representatives, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In addition, a Mixed Military Working Group had been set up, including officers from the three sides, to carry out detailed planning of the demilitarization of Sarajevo. That Group had met today under the Chairmanship of UNPROFOR General Philippe Morillon, marking the first time that the three sides had sat down together since the earliest days of the war.

The Co-Chairmen held their first meeting in the latest round of talks on Saturday, 17 October, with Prime Minister Milan Panic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and again on Wednesday, 21 October. On Monday, 19 October, President Alija Izebegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic of the Federal Republic held an historic first meeting and issued a joint statement. The following day, Tuesday, President Cosic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman held a follow-up meeting to their first encounter in Geneva on 30 September, following which they issued a statement.

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Although the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on humanitarian activities in Iraq did not satisfy all the United Nations' aspirations, the agreement signed with Iraq yesterday "was a good result", Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Eliasson told reporters at Headquarters today. In view of the urgency of the situation, with winter approaching, he said he hoped the plan could now move into high gear, "to avoid very, very difficult conditions for a vulnerable part of the Iraqi population" in the North and the South, while also providing relief for other groups in Iraq.

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Mr. Eliasson denied that the United Nations had accomodated an Iraqi demand that it reduce the number of its personnel in the country. He pointed out that since the expiration on 30 June of the previous MOU, the programme had ground to a halt, with only 107 guards and less than a hundred agency and non-governmental personnel remaining. The guards contingent had never totalled more than 450 and the new limit of 300 had been reached in consultation with the agencies, according to the needs they had assessed in the field. There would also be several hundred agency and NGO personnel in the area.

The total cost of the plan, Mr. Eliasson said, was estimated to be $217 million. Traditionally, humanitarian activities in Iraq had been funded by voluntary contributions, and some States had already indicated support for the fuel that would have to be bought very soon, and some had expressed interest in supplying United Nations guards.

Earlier this month, Mr. Eliasson's office announced that pledges of cash contributions for the Iraqi programme had been received from a number of Member States, including $6.5 million from the United States and $2 million from Japan.

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Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Milan Panic, has offered to receive Bosnian/Serb aircraft on an airfield in Yugoslavia where, he said, "it would be easier for the United Nations to exercise control over their use". The proposal was put forward in a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 16 October, in connection with ongoing talks with the Bosnian/Serb side to place those aircraft under United Nations control.

Meanwhile, in a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 21 October, Croatian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mario Nobilo, expressed concern over the transfer of aircraft from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, saying it constituted a violation of the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council against the territory of former Yugoslavia.

While Croatia hoped that international control over Serbian-operated aircraft in Bosnia and Herzegovina would prevent further air attacks on civilians in Bosnia as well as in Croatia, Mr Nobilo emphasized that, because of the sensitivity of the matter, measures imposed by the United Nations must be observed in a comprehensive way.

The Croatian Ambassador added that the aircraft were to be considered common property of the successor States of the former Yugoslavia to be divided among those States. He urged that the question be included in the agenda of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia at Geneva.
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The Chairman of the Yugoslavia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Jose Ayalo Lasso of Ecuador, told the press at Headquarters today that the Committee had received an appeal from Montenegro for urgent humanitarian assistance in the wake of floods there. At its meeting yesterday, the Committee had decided that, as a matter of utmost urgency, any offer from the United Nations agencies, the international humanitarian organizations or any Member State to provide the necessary disaster relief would be taken up by the Committee immediately.

Ambassador Lasso said he had consulted with the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, on what immediate emergency disaster relief could be provided to Montenegro by the United Nations. He stressed that while maintaining the mandatory arms embargo imposed on the whole of former Yugoslavia, the Committee treated with concern and urgency every request for humanitarian assistance for the people of Serbia and Montenegro. Foodstuffs and medical supplies were specifically exempted from the sanctions regime. He cited as an example the fact that the Committee had recently approved the export by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) of various emergency supplies, including clothes and blankets for the Moslim, Roman and Serbian refugee children in Serbia and Montenegro.

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The Secretary-General's Spokesman announced today that Canada, France and the Netherlands had extended invitations to the United Nations to attend, as a full extra-regional participant, the meetings of three Working groups on Middle East regional issue. The working groups are the Working Group on Environment, which will take place at the Hague on 26 to 27 October; the Working Group on Economic and regional Development, scheduled for 29 to 30 October; and the Working Group on Refugees, to be held in Ottawa from 11 to 12 November.

The invitation was delivered to the Secretary-General by the Canada, France and the Netherland's Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, in the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States, which are the co-sponsors of the Middle East peace negotiations.

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Appeals for United Nations intervention, addressed to the Secretary-General and the Security Council, have been received from the representatives of Moldova, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The Foreign Minister of Moldova, Nicolae Tau, in a letter dated 20 October, reiterated a request made earlier this month by the Moldovan Parliament that a United Nations observer mission be sent to his country. He asked that the mission monitor the process of Moldo-Russian negotiations concerning the Transnistrian issue, including the wihdrawal of the Russian 14th Army.

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Protesting the support by Russian President Boris Yeltsin for secessionist forces within Moldova, he asked that aid which the European Community, the United States, Canada and Japan proposed to grant the Russian Federation be conditional on it withdrawing its armed forces from Moldovan territory.

The Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations, L. Kayumov, in a letter dated 21 October, said that measures taken in his country by the political leadership have failed to halt the conflict between local armed groups and to create peaceful, stable conditions for those affected by the violence. His Government therefore requested that a peacemaking mission be sent to Tajikistan, and that humanitarian aid be provided urgently.

The Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Medet Sherimkulov, supported that appeal. In a letter dated 15 October, he conveyed the request of the Supreme Council that the Security Council give urgent consideration to the situation in Tajikistan, and that the Secretary-General use his personal influence and the prestige of the United Nations to help settle the conflict.
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Two officials of the Tuzla region in Bosnia and Herzegovina have appealed to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and "the whole world opinion" to organize international activity in order to rescue the people of the Tuzla region.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, the President of the Coordination Council of the Tuzla Region and the Commander of the Regional Staff Defence of Tuzla said 80,000 people had been surrounded by the aggressor for more that six months without food, medicaments, footwear and clothes. The people in the Tuzla region were faced with massacre as the army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was moving in "with large-scale war technics attacking innocent and unarmed people".

They requested that a convoy with humanitarian aid be sent to the region and that the corridor be restituted in order to save the civilians from total devastation.

The letter was transmitted by the Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Muhamed Sacirbey, and was dated 21 October.

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Major-General Krishna Narayan Singh Thapa of Nepal was today appointed by the Secretary-General as Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), with effect from 26 October.

General Thapa, who succeeds Major-General Hans Christensen of Finland, was commissioned as an officer in 1957. In addition to having held various

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command and staff appointments, he has also served as Commandant of the Infantry School, Director of Military Training and, until recently, as Quartermaster General. He has had two previous tours of duty with the United Nations, first as Chief Humanitarian Officer and later as Chief of Staff of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

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